

Philadelphia Inquirer

Delbert Africa Aug 8, 1978

20 YEARS



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

ON THE MOVE

JOHN AFRICA's Organization

The MOVE Organization surfaced in Philadelphia during the early 1970's. Characterized by dreadlock hair, the adopted surname "Africa", a principled unity, and an uncompromising commitment to their belief, members practiced the teachings of MOVE founder JOHN AFRICA.

"MOVE'S WORK IS TO STOP INDUSTRY FROM POISONING THE AIR, THE WATER, THE SOIL, AND TO PUT AN END TO THE ENSLAVEMENT OF LIFE - PEOPLE, ANIMALS, ANY FORM OF LIFE. THE PURPOSE OF JOHN AFRICA'S REVOLUTION IS TO SHOW PEOPLE HOW CORRUPT, ROTTEN, CRIMINALLY ENSLAVING THIS SYSTEM IS, SHOW PEOPLE THROUGH JOHN AFRICA'S TEACHING, THE TRUTH, THAT THIS SYSTEM IS THE CAUSE OF ALL THEIR PROBLEMS (ALCOHOLISM, DRUG ADDICTION, UNEMPLOYMENT, WIFE ABUSE, CHILD PORNOGRAPHY, EVERY PROBLEM IN THE WORLD) AND TO SET THE EXAMPLE OF REVOLUTION FOR PEOPLE TO FOLLOW WHEN THEY REALIZE HOW THEY'VE BEEN OPPRESSED, REPESED, DUPED, TRICKED BY THIS SYSTEM, THIS GOVERNMENT AND SEE THE NEED TO RID THEMSELVES OF THIS CANCEROUS SYSTEM AS MOVE DOES."

MOVE

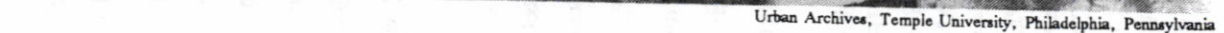
"...all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security."

United States
Declaration of
Independence



Tomassa, Tree and Netta Africa
(All murdered by the City of Philadelphia May 13, 1985)

THE HOUSE
JOHN AFRICA
BUILT ON THE
FOUNDATION
OF LIFE
LONG STAND THE HOUSE
JOHN AFRICA BUILT
LONG LIVE REVOLUTION
LONG LIVE MOVE



Community Involvement

During the early 1970's MOVE was based in the Powelton Village section of West Philadelphia. Members had a preference for hard physical work and were constantly chopping firewood, running dogs, shoveling snow or sweeping the street. MOVE helped homeless people find places to live, assisted the elderly with home repairs, intervened in violence between local gangs and college fraternities, and helped incarcerated offenders meet parole requirements through a rehabilitation program. After adopting MOVE's way of natural living, many individuals overcame past problems of drug addiction, physical disabilities, infertility and alcoholism.

MOVE purchased a large Victorian house at 309 N. 33rd Street, which became their headquarters. One of MOVE's fundraising activities was a very popular car wash at this location. At regular study sessions for people interested in the teachings of JOHN AFRICA, MOVE welcomed dissenting views as an opportunity to showcase their belief and sharpen their oratory skills which they knew would be tested in their revolutionary struggle.

"IT IS THE POSITION OF MOVE TO CONFRONT ANY SPEAKER, SO-CALLED INFORMED PERSONALITIES, ALLEGED LEADERS WHO SAY THEY HAVE ANSWERS TO THE VERY SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF PEOPLE, AND DEMAND THAT THEY SUBSTANTIATE, QUALIFY WHAT THEY ARE SAYING OR STOP MISLEADING PEOPLE. INFORMATION IS IN THE ABILITY TO INFORM, AND WHEN YOU HAVE NO INFORMATION TO GIVE, YOU CAN ONLY MISINFORM. THIS IS THE STATED POLICY OF MOVE, TO STAMP OUT MISINFORMATION, FOR WHEN YOU DO NOT HAVE A SOLUTION, ALL YOU CAN OFFER IS THE PROBLEM."

MOVE



After 7 years, Ramona Africa freed

Philadelphia Inquirer
Thursday, May 14, 1992

WOMEN'S REVOLUTION
ORGANIZATIONAL
OFFICE
-57-
for Ramona

Seeking Justice - Part II

After the tragic deaths and destruction the City caused in 1985, the vast publicity surrounding the disaster continually overlooked the fact that MOVE's original demand for justice in the 1978 confrontation remained unresolved. MOVE talked to authors Margot Harry, Michael Boyette and Paul Wahrhaftig and taped hours of video interviews with Geraldo Rivera, Martin Smith of Frontline News, and Leslie Stahl of Face the Nation, but there was almost no mention of the Rule 1100 violation or Judge DiBona's lack of jurisdiction in any of the resulting broadcasts and books. (see pages 20 and 24)

During his time as governor of Pennsylvania, Dick Thornburgh refused to reopen Castille's grand jury investigation. When he later became head of the U.S. Justice Department, he declined to reopen the federal probe of May 13, 1985. Thornburgh did not consider his prior history of contact with MOVE to be a conflict of interest. (see pages 34 and 40)

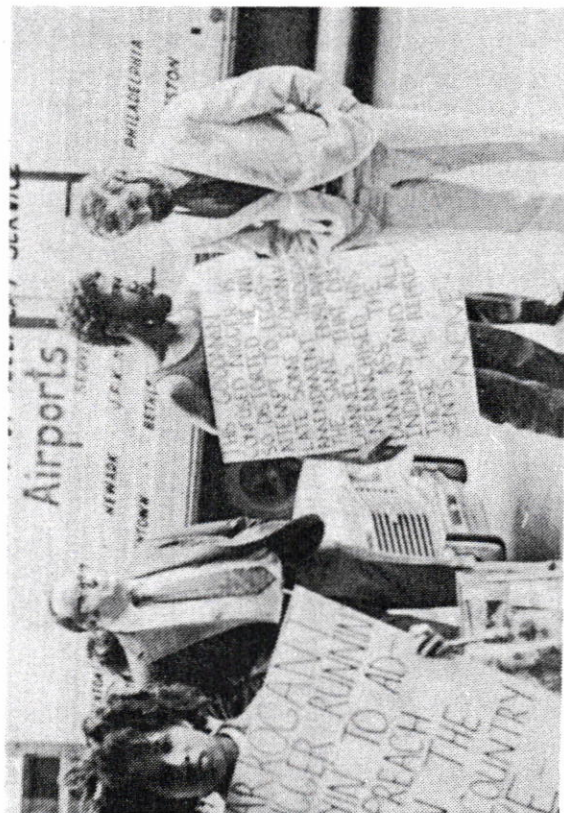
Philadelphia's current District Attorney, Lynne Abraham, has been apprised of MOVE's legal grievances and demands for justice. Her initial response has been to take no action. Abraham also has a history of involvement with MOVE. (see pages 18 and 42)

Robert Casey, the current governor of Pennsylvania, has the power to pardon or commute the sentences of any state prisoner. He is also responsible for signing death warrants. If all of Mumia Abu-Jamal's appeals are exhausted, the final decision between life or death rests in the governor's hands.



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MOVE protesting Jerry Africa's incarceration May 1975



Philadelphia Tribune

MOVE at Jesse Jackson PUSH Conference Aug 15, 1975

Frank Rizzo and the Police

Throughout the 1970's, Frank Rizzo was the key figure in Philadelphia government. He started as a street cop and rose through the department's ranks, eventually serving as Police Commissioner from 1967-71. During this time he gained notoriety for his "tough-guy" law enforcement and racist attitude.

In 1967 Rizzo's first major action as Commissioner had been to halt a peaceful demonstration of some 3500 black high school students asking for educational reforms and Black Studies programs by unleashing hordes of cops who charged with no provocation and chased students for blocks. Many were beaten. In Philadelphia's black ghettos Rizzo's mostly white police force was much feared and hated. Rizzo was elected mayor in 1972 and re-elected in 1976. Having built his career on opposing black efforts to challenge the status quo, he ran the City with a prominent and heavy-handed police force that had a national reputation for brutality.

In response, MOVE launched demonstration after demonstration aimed at focusing attention on police abuses. Community groups across the City sought MOVE's help in setting up demonstrations in their own neighborhoods. As a result of this activism, the police began a concerted campaign of harassment against MOVE, breaking up demonstrations by arresting MOVE members on disorderly conduct charges or violations of whatever local ordinance could be made to apply.



Fred W. Jacobs - Chairman
Board of Probation and Parole
3101 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17105-1661
(717) 782-2259



Carlos Perez Africa
AM-7400
Drawer K
Dallas, PA 18612

The Future of Philadelphia

In the summer of 1991 Move purchased a house on Kingsessing Avenue in West Philadelphia. Several months passed quietly until police and reporters converged on the block after they learned MOVE was living there. The media has tried to give the impression of vehement neighborhood opposition to MOVE with speculation on the possibility of another catastrophe. MOVE points out that in their over 20-year history, destruction, violence and death have always been the work of the police, so inquiries as to the future likelihood of such occurrences should be directed to City officials. MOVE has never dropped a bomb, burned down a neighborhood or killed anyone, they have only demanded the release of innocent members.

Mayor Goode's successor will take office in Jan of 1992. Ramona Africa will have served her maximum sentence and must be released by May 13, 1992. Even if Carlos, Sue and Consuewella are not granted parole, their sentences will expire within the next couple of years. Yet nine other MOVE members remain unjustly incarcerated on 30-100 year sentences.

"AS LONG AS WE ARE ALIVE, WE WILL NEVER ABANDON OUR INNOCENT BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN JAIL, AND THEY KNOW WE WILL NEVER ABANDON THEM, AND THIS CITY GONNA ALWAYS HAVE A PROBLEM UNTIL EVERY LAST ONE OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IS HOME."

MOVE

To help in the struggle for justice,
or for more information, contact:

Concerned Citizens in Support of MOVE
P.O. Box 19709
Philadelphia, PA 19143



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MOVE headquarters at 309 North 33rd Street



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Delbert Africa at Philadelphia School Board meeting March 25, 1974

Public Appearances and Media Coverage

At public forums and lectures of noted authorities including Dick Gregory, Alan Watts, Jane Fonda, Julian Bond, Richie Havens, Walter Mondale, Roy Wilkins, Buckminster Fuller, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Caesar Chavez and Russell Means, MOVE presented their views when questions were taken from the audience. Many of these figures were receptive to what MOVE said, some met again with MOVE privately, others were hostile, but none could refute JOHN AFRICA's teachings.

By 1974 MOVE was appearing in public with increasing frequency. In demonstrations at zoos, pet shops, political rallies, public forums and media offices, MOVE used non-violent protest and strategized profanity to expose the profane circumstances of the system's injustices.

"IF OUR PROFANITY OFFENDS YOU, LOOK AROUND YOU AND SEE HOW DESTRUCTIVELY SOCIETY IS PROFANING ITSELF. IT IS THE RAPE OF THE LAND, THE POLLUTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT, THE BETRAYAL AND SUFFERING OF THE MASSES BY CORRUPT GOVERNMENT THAT IS THE REAL OBSCENTY."

MOVE

The mainstream media began a long history of distorted MOVE coverage using misquotes, unverified rumors and biased stories. MOVE's unique appearance, alarming profanity and unconventional behavior got prominent attention, while rehabilitative efforts and positive community activities were largely ignored, along with the essence of MOVE's message. While those who actually met MOVE members could see the remarkable strength and health they exhibited, dehumanizing news accounts perpetrated the falsehood that members never bathed and were diseased.

Philadelphia Inquirer



Dick Thornburgh

Philadelphia Inquirer



Lynne Abraham
District Attorney
1421 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 686-8000

Philadelphia Inquirer



Governor Robert P. Casey
Main Capitol Building Room 225
Harrisburg, PA 17120
1-800-932-0784

The Parole Board

A jail sentence in Pennsylvania consists of a minimum and maximum time. Upon serving the minimum, an inmate becomes eligible for parole. Cases are reviewed by the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, whose current chairman is Fred W. Jacobs. As early as 1986 Ramona, Carlos, Consuewella and Sue Africa were eligible for parole and prison officials approved their release. Judge Michael Stiles, who sentenced Ramona, also recommended she be paroled. Yet in every case, the Board stipulated that if any MOVE member is granted parole, he or she must agree not to associate with MOVE, even when the person's husband or wife is a member. The constitutionality of this special condition is questionable. Alberta and Alfonso Africa both refused this same stipulation and were imprisoned for their maximum sentences of 7 and 5 years.

Starting in 1989, the City has made a token effort to deal with MOVE by having the Managing Director's office try to set up a meeting with the Parole Board, but so far the Board has been uncooperative. MOVE has little patience left for bureaucrats and politicians who want to be able to say they have addressed a problem, but have no real intentions of bringing about a solution.

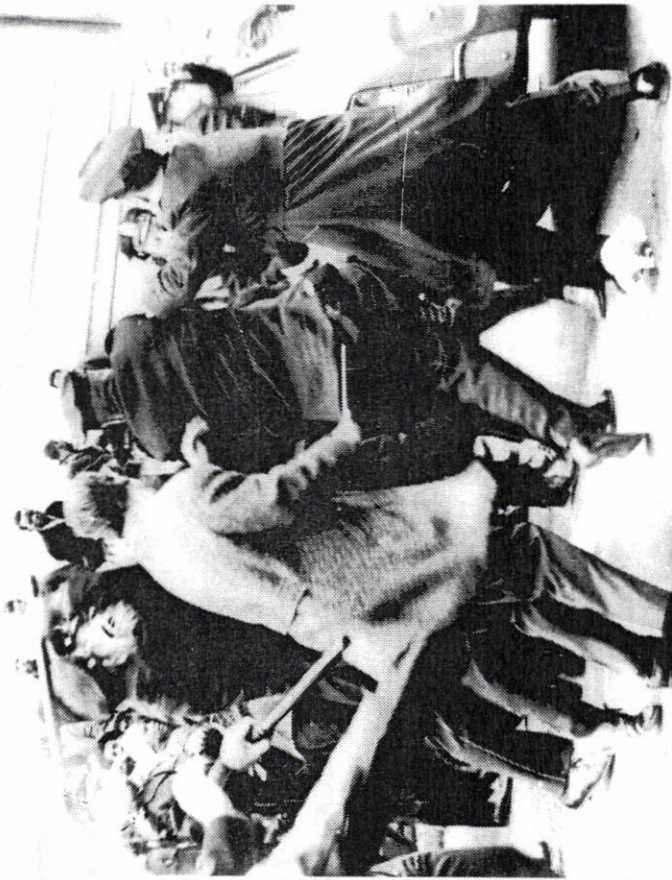
After Carlos Africa was told in Feb of 1991 that he would not be held to the special condition, his work plan and living arrangements were checked and approved by Board officials. But just before final clearance, the Board demanded he agree to the same stipulation. Carlos refused and remains incarcerated.

The Parole Board is appointed by the state governor. Lack of media coverage has kept their actions out of public view and effectively given Board members a free hand to do as they please.



Philadelphia Daily News

Frank Rizzo



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Rizzo's brutal police force attacking students Nov 17, 1967

Police Brutality

On May 18, 1974, police stopped Leasing and Janet Africa on a Southwest Philadelphia street for questioning. Both were pregnant MOVE members and said so. The officers then became abusive and slammed Janet stomach-first against a police car. The two were subjected to very rough handling, jailed overnight and denied food and water. Both women lost their babies due to miscarriages.

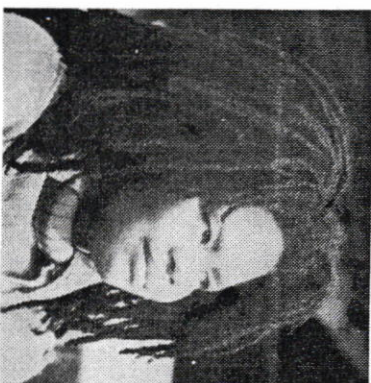
By 1975, clashes between MOVE and the police reached increasingly brutal proportions, though the City denied any role in such abusive handling. Instead of being deterred by frequent arrests and jail stays, MOVE's deep commitment only led to more determined demonstrations. On April 29, 1975 a MOVE protest against ill-treatment of jailed members at the police administration building at 8th and Race Street led to several arrests. Alberta Africa, who was pregnant, was dragged from a holding cell, held spread-eagle by four officers and repeatedly kicked in the stomach and vagina by a matron named Robinson, suffering a miscarriage as a result.

Despite police violence against MOVE individuals who had not even been born, many MOVE mothers did bear children, and did so naturally without drugs or medical assistance, in accordance with JOHN AFRICA's teachings. Sue Africa, in spite of several police beatings throughout her pregnancy, had a son, Tomassa, born at 33rd Street headquarters on Aug 4, 1975. Janine Africa's baby, Life Africa was born March 8, 1976 but murdered by the police less than a month later. (Tomassa was later murdered May 13, 1985.)



Democrat and Chronicle

Sue Leon Africa
#00-6325
P.O. Box 180
Muncy, PA 17756



Merte Austin Africa
#00-6306
P.O. Box 180
Muncy, PA 17756



Philadelphia Journal

Edward Goodman Africa
AM-4974
P.O. Box 200
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0200



an Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia

Debbie Sims Africa
#00-6307
P.O. Box 180
Muncy, PA 17756



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia

Charles Sims Africa
AM-4975
P.O. Box 99901
Pittsburgh, PA 15233



Philadelphia Journal

Janet Holloway Africa
#00-6308
P.O. Box 180
Muncy, PA 17756

Sue Africa

One of the most blatant cases of unjust imprisonment involves Sue Africa, arrested June 1977, released May 1978 as part of the agreement with the City, and rearrested May 1981 in Rochester NY. As a white MOVE member, Sue endured intense pressure to disavow MOVE. She was interrogated, threatened, brutalized and forced to undergo 30 days of psychiatric evaluation against her will, but the government's attempts to split MOVE along racial lines failed.

Sue was sentenced by Judge James McDermott to 3½-7 years for riot, and 2½-5 years for possession of an instrument of crime. (Judge McDermott later became a justice in the State Supreme Court.) Legally all sentences regarding a single transaction run concurrently, meaning Sue should have been released in 1988, but these two sentences were somehow made consecutive, amounting to 12 years. Despite clear directives to file an appeal, Sue's court-appointed backup lawyer failed to do so. When later attempts were made to challenge these irregularities, the courts claimed the transcripts of the hearings and trial were lost. These transcripts are the primary evidence for appeals. Even if Sue had been sentenced correctly, the original charges stemmed from her involvement in the May 20, 1977 demonstration and were therefore void after the Nov 1977 Rule 1100 deadline expired. (See page 20)

Besides being oversentenced on expired charges, Sue has been denied parole since 1987. The Parole Board has conspired to deny all MOVE members parole by means of a special stipulation that they not associate with any other members if released.



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Sue Africa with her son Tomassa Aug 6, 1975



34th Street Magazine

MOVE protesting killing of Life Africa March 29, 1976

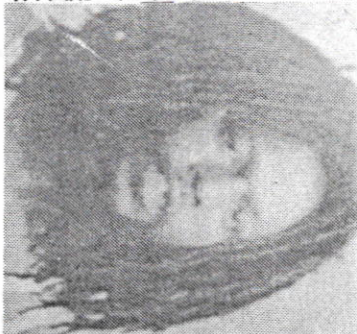
MOVE Baby Murdered

On March 28, 1976 seven MOVE members in jail for contempt sentences were released late in the evening and arrived home after midnight. Officers in at least 10 police cars and wagons pulled up in front of the 33rd St house and said MOVE was creating a disturbance. When Chuck Africa told police to leave MOVE alone, Officer Daniel Palermo grabbed him and began to beat him as other cops pulled out nightsticks and set upon MOVE members. Six MOVE men were arrested and beaten so viciously they suffered fractured skulls, concussions and chipped bones. Jerry Africa was struck over the head with a nightstick that broke in two from the force of the blow. Janine Africa was trying to protect her husband Phil Africa when she was grabbed by a cop, thrown to the ground with 3 week old Life Africa in her arms, and stomped until she was nearly unconscious. The baby's skull was crushed.

The next morning MOVE notified the media that the police had brutally attacked them and a baby had been murdered. An officer's hat and the broken nightstick were displayed outside MOVE headquarters. Police denied that any beatings took place or a baby was killed, and claimed that the baby probably never existed because there was no birth certificate. To prove the death to a doubtful media, a few local politicians and photographers were invited to a dinner at MOVE headquarters, after which they were shown the baby's body.

Charges against the six MOVE men arrested in the attack were dropped when it became apparent that MOVE neighbors could give eyewitness testimony to the baby's murder. No legal action was taken against the officers involved.

Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia



William Phillips Africa
AM-4984 (Phil)
P.O. Box 200
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0200

Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia



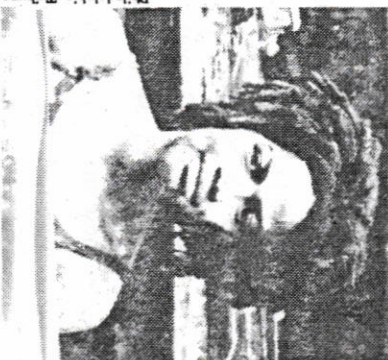
Michael Davis Africa
AM-4973
Drawer R
Huntingdon, PA 16652

Philadelphia Tribune



Delbert Orr Africa
AM-4985
Drawer K
Dallas, PA 18612

Philadelphia Tribune



Janine Phillips Africa
#00-6309
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Muncy, PA 17756

MOVE



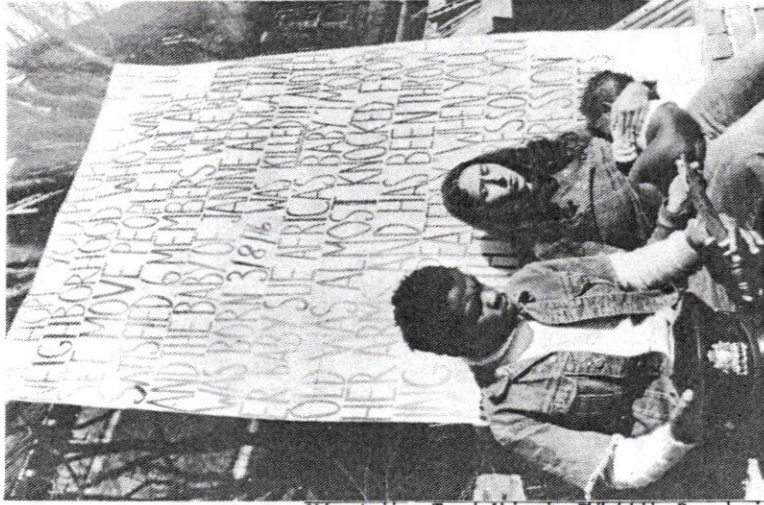
Consuewella Dotson Africa
#00-6434
P.O. Box 180
Muncy, PA 17756

Prison Treatment

There are currently 13 MOVE members imprisoned by the Pennsylvania penal system. Locked away in remote areas of the state, far from the public eye, they have endured years of continuous physical and mental harassment. Delbert, Carlos and Chuck Africa were kept in solitary confinement over five years for refusing to violate MOVE belief by cutting their hair. At Muncy prison, MOVE women upheld their religious principles by refusing to give blood samples and were repeatedly put in solitary confinement, sometimes for as long as 3 years. Sadistic prison guards were delighted to inform Delbert, Janet, Sue, Phil, Janine and Consuewella Africa that some of their children were killed in the police assault on May 13, 1985.

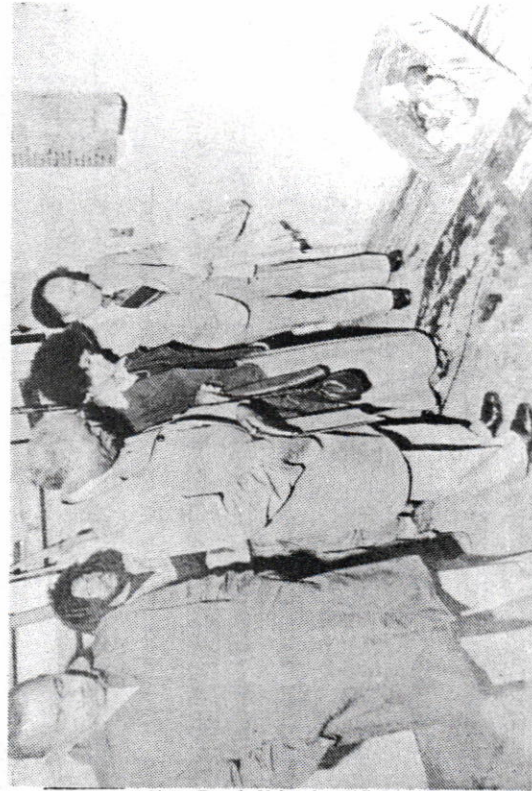
No MOVE members were involved in the inmates' riot at Camp Hill prison in 1989, but Chuck Africa was singled out by correctional officers Bray, Cywinski and Lt. Komsisky, who all had a vendetta against him. While handcuffed and shackled, Chuck was brutally attacked and beaten, then transported incommunicado across the country until lodged at the maximum security prison in Lompoc, California until his return to Pennsylvania 16 months later.

Delbert, Phil and Edward Africa were also abruptly transferred out of state and weeks passed before their family learned their whereabouts. Phil and Edward were shuffled through a number of prisons before arriving at the U.S. Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas. Delbert was eventually taken to the military prison at Fort Gordon, Georgia. They spent many months, and in Phil's case, over a year at these locations before being returned to Pennsylvania.



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The day after the March 28, 1976 police attack



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Joseph Coleman, Lucien Blackwell and his wife Jamie are shown the body of Life Africa April 2, 1976

MOVE Begins Leaving Philadelphia

Dragged into the justice system by repeated arrests, MOVE took on the courts and eventually overwhelmed them. Wary of court-appointed public defenders paid by the very administration so intent on locking them up, MOVE defendants acted as their own attorneys in accordance with the belief that self-defense is a God-given right. Trials were rarely concluded on the original charges because MOVE was so often held in contempt. Judges took offense at hearing profanity, even though it was quoted from statements made at demonstrations, and both defendant and witness were commonly cited for contempt. MOVE always appealed contempt charges and demanded bail on appeal and the court transcripts as evidence. Appeal hearings often led to further contempt citations. With a growing mountain of paperwork, court records were thrown into confusion by so many cases with the same title: "Commonwealth of Pennsylvania vs. Africa."

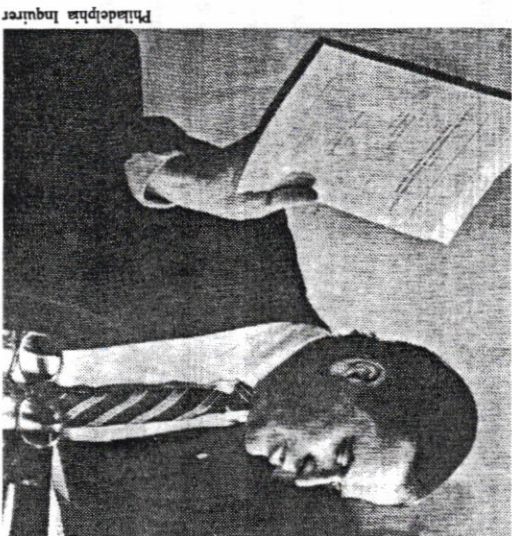
By early 1976, hundreds of MOVE trials and hearings had so clogged the justice system that court administrators begged MOVE for relief. Having made their point to the authorities who found them unstoppable by any legal means, MOVE refrained from further demonstrations and carefully avoided attempts by the police to be provoked. The courts in turn began to clear the backlog by throwing out MOVE cases in wholesale lots. MOVE started relocating to several areas outside of Pennsylvania during the summer of 1976, and searched for farmland to provide a healthy environment for their children. They later secured a mortgage and put a down payment on a 96-acre farm in Virginia.

The idea that a group of self-proclaimed revolutionaries could wreak havoc on the courts and get away with exposing and embarrassing the police department did not sit well with Frank Rizzo's administration. And with no more demonstrations, the police had none of the usual opportunities to harass and arrest MOVE.



PAMELA PRICE—PICTURE GROUP

Ramona Africa arrested May 13, 1985



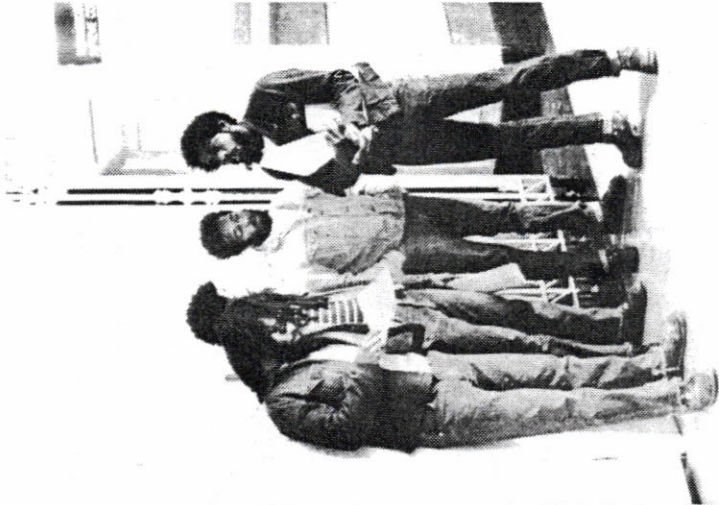
Ron Castille

Blaming The Victim

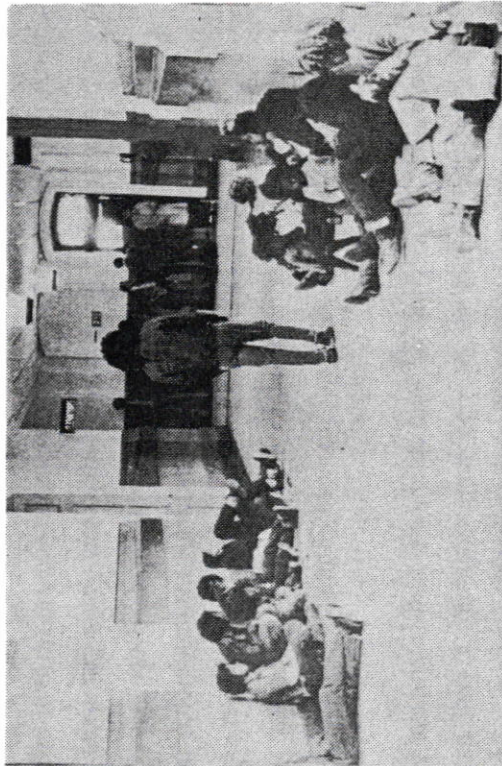
Ramona Africa was charged with conspiracy, riot and multiple counts of simple and aggravated assault. Although no testimony was presented indicating she ever held or fired a weapon, a jury found her guilty and Judge Michael Stiles sentenced her to 16 months to 7 years. Lt. Frank Powell, who dropped the bomb, and Officer William Klein, who assembled it, refused to testify, citing the Fifth Amendment right against self incrimination. Mayor Goode appointed a special commission to investigate the catastrophe, but it had no power to indict. Findings released in March of 1986 were highly critical of City officials and included extensive recommendations, but as years passed these were largely disregarded and forgotten.

In 1986, District Attorney Ron Castille impanelled a grand jury to investigate criminal wrongdoing on the part of the City. Notwithstanding 11 deaths, 60 homes burned to the ground, unauthorized possession and use of military explosives, and a fire that was deliberately allowed to burn out of control, Castille's grand jury followed his recommendations and returned not a single indictment. A federal grand jury investigating civil rights violations also returned no indictments. All of these investigations carefully limited the scope of their inquiries to events surrounding May 13, 1985 and neglected to look at earlier legal improprieties.

In 1987 Wilson Goode was re-elected mayor. He and his supporters considered this a vindication of the disastrous handling of May 13th. Others saw his victory as a grim necessity. The opposing candidate was Frank Rizzo. (Rizzo was a mayoral candidate again in 1991, but died July 16 that year of a heart attack.)



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MOVE outside City Hall courtrooms March 1976

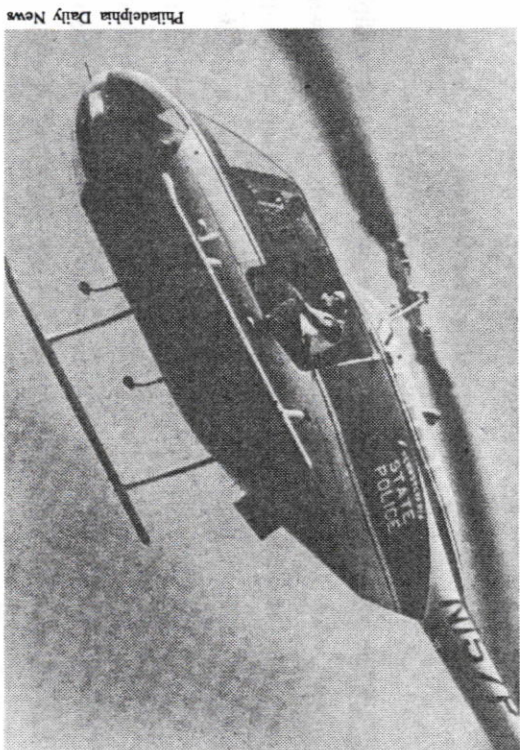
The Set-Up

On Nov 5, 1976 the City summoned some 20 MOVE members to appear in court. Many now lived out of the area but returned to resolve legal matters consisting largely of formalities. Judge Edward Blake improperly ordered several defendants taken into custody whose bail status, pending appeal, could not be legally altered. They went peacefully, confident that Robert Africa, MOVE's legal expert, could soon have them released.

On the way to a holding cell, Sheriff Jerry Saunders began beating one handcuffed young MOVE member, Dennis Africa. Other members came to his rescue and a brief scuffle ensued. Sheriffs locked up all those involved, then arrested and brutalized Rhonda, Valerie and Robert Africa who had no part in the altercation. Nearly 9 months pregnant, Rhonda went into premature labor the next day, giving birth to a bruised and injured baby that soon died. (Rhonda herself was later murdered by the City on May 13, 1985.)

Robert, Conrad and Jerry Africa were singled out for trial before Judge Paul Ribner in Feb of 1977. The cases of the others were dismissed. Though it was well known that MOVE refused to stand when "all rise" was directed during a judge's entrance, Ribner ordered sheriffs to physically force members to their feet. The courts had previously maintained a facade of tolerance for MOVE's right to their belief, but this blatant disrespect, coupled with escalating brutality, crystallized the City's intent to eliminate MOVE.

Eventually, Ribner cited all three defendants for contempt of court. After he violated due process by denying them contempt appeal hearings, MOVE members refused to participate further. They were then tried in absentia, found guilty of assault and sentenced to long jail terms. MOVE considered Robert, Conrad and Jerry political prisoners.



Lt. Frank Powell prepares to drop the bomb May 13, 1985



MARTY KATZ—OUTLINE COURTESY WPVI-TV

The neighborhood is destroyed

Murder In The Alley

With their house in flames, MOVE members repeatedly tried to exit but were met with police gunfire which killed some of the adults and children in the alley behind the house. One adult, Ramona Africa, and one child, Birdy Africa, escaped the fire and were taken into custody. Six adults and five children died.

Media reports the next day indicated gunfire during three separate intervals after the bomb was dropped. Several firemen told of hearing automatic weapons during this time, and one policeman, in initial questioning, made reference to police firing their Uzi's. Within days the story began changing. At a press conference, Police Commissioner Gregore Sambor, who was himself in the vicinity of the alley, indicated that police *did* fire at this time, but after conferring with aides said he was certain they did no shooting. In later weeks, all police denied that any officer fired a shot after the house was burning. A bolt-action rifle, two shotguns and two revolvers were the only weapons found in the ashes of the MOVE house.

Also on May 13, 1985, the police in Chester, PA in cooperation with Philadelphia authorities used tear gas to storm the Chester home of Alfonso Africa. The only adult present, his wife Mary, was arrested and their 5 children were taken away as police ransacked the house. The legal basis for this action was Judge Lynne Abraham's warrant for Alfonso, though he was already incarcerated since May 8, on unrelated charges of threatening Officer James McDonnell, who had previously shot him during an arrest on June 10, 1984.

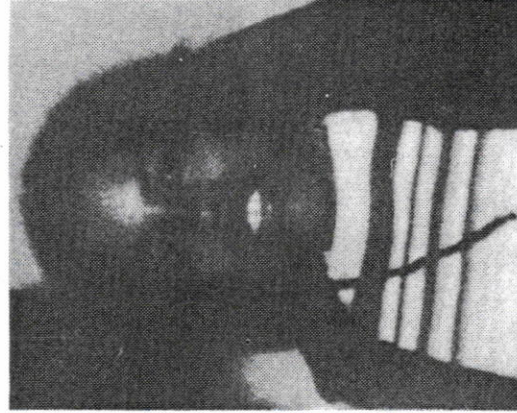


Judge Ribner

Judge Blake

PHOTO

UNAVAILABLE



MOVE

Rhonda Africa

May 20, 1977 Demonstration

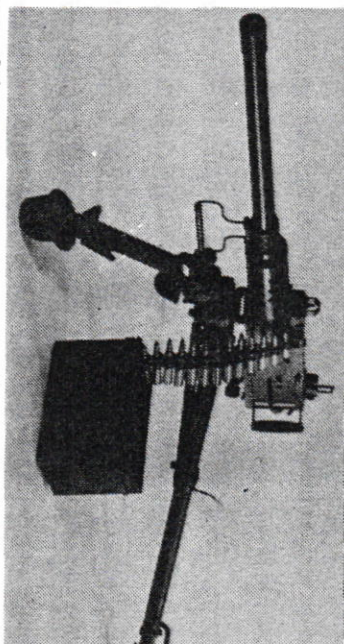
The City had now "set-up" key members for arrest and manipulated their cases towards long jail sentences. As the government vendetta escalated, MOVE foresaw the possibility that police could storm the 33rd St house, kill those inside, and blame the victims for their own deaths in an operation similar to the type of government terrorism used against the Black Panthers. Relocated members had to return to the City to protect the house.

On May 20, 1977 MOVE staged a major demonstration demanding the release of their political prisoners and an end to the violent harassment by the City. To keep an increasingly brutal police force at bay, MOVE appeared outside their house with firearms.

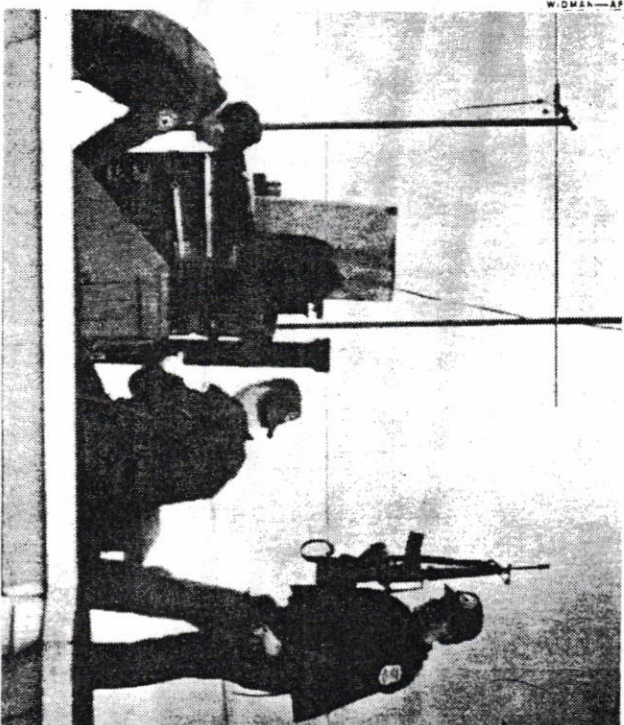
"WE TOLD THE COPS THERE WASN'T GONNA BE ANYMORE UNDERCOVER DEATHS. THIS TIME THEY BETTER BE PREPARED TO MURDER US IN FULL PUBLIC VIEW, CAUSE IF THEY CAME AT US WITH FISTS, WE WERE GONNA COME BACK WITH FISTS. IF THEY CAME WITH CLUBS, WE'D COME BACK WITH CLUBS, AND IF THEY CAME WITH GUNS, WE'D USE GUNS TOO. WE DON'T BELIEVE IN DEATH-DEALING GUNS, WE BELIEVE IN LIFE. BUT WE KNEW THE COPS WOULDN'T BE SO QUICK TO ATTACK US IF THEY HAD TO FACE THE SAME STUFF THEY DISHED OUT SO CASUALLY ON UNARMED DEFENSELESS FOLK."

MOVE

Police Commissioner Joseph O'Neill stated it was not a crime for MOVE to have firearms on their property. Four days later, the City sidestepped the lack of any firearms violations by having Judge Lynne Abraham issue warrants for 11 MOVE members on riot charges and "possession of an instrument of crime." Police began 24-hour surveillance to make arrests. The media unfairly depicted MOVE as illegal gun-toting bandits.



Some of the weapons used by police (from top): M-16 assault rifle, M-60 machine gun, .50-caliber machine gun



Police snipers at rooftop assault post

May 13, 1985 Bombing and Fire

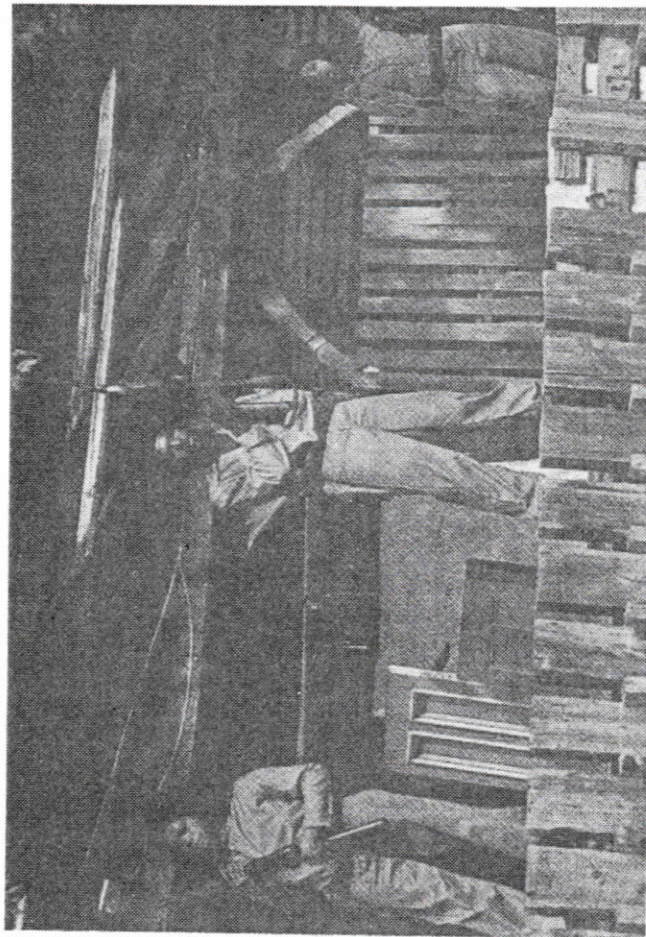
MOVE told negotiators attempting a last minute resolution that if the City could refute any claim regarding past improper legal procedures, and if one official would honestly investigate the unjust jailing of MOVE members, MOVE would call off the confrontation. Officials, and the media, ignored this. On May 11, 1985 Judge Lynne Abraham signed arrest warrants for Ramona, Conrad, Frank and Teresa Africa on charges of disorderly conduct and terroristic threats, and a warrant for Alfonso Africa on weapons violations. On Mother's Day, May 12, police evacuated the 6200 block of Osage Ave and towed away parked cars.

On Monday May 13, police and firemen launched a full scale military assault on the MOVE rowhouse using tear gas, water cannons, shotguns, Uzi's, M-16s, silenced weapons, Browning Automatic Rifles, M-60 machine guns, a 20mm anti-tank gun, and a .50-caliber machine gun. Some of these weapons were illegally obtained with the help of the U.S. Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms Agency.

Between 6:00 and 7:30 am police fired over 10,000 rounds of ammunition at the house knowing there were women and children inside. They also tried to blast through the walls with the military explosives the FBI had illegally provided. When none of these measures succeeded in driving MOVE from the house, a state police helicopter was used to drop a bomb on the roof. This started a fire that officials deliberately allowed to burn. It soon spread to the adjoining rowhouses, eventually burning down the entire block of some 60 homes.

With the neighborhood still smoldering, Philadelphia was front page news around the world.

Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



MOVE holds a demonstration outside their headquarters May 20, 1977



Philadelphia Inquirer

Sue Africa puts out information May 20, 1977

The Slip-Up: Rule 1100

On June 12, 1977 Sue Africa was arrested a few blocks from MOVE headquarters. No other MOVE members left the house as police continued to wait in the months that followed. Rule 1100 of Pennsylvania Criminal Procedures allows for 180 days within which to either execute an arrest warrant or file for an extension. On Nov 20, this time limit on the MOVE warrants expired. The next day the District Attorney's office filed a late request for extension. (They may have forgotten the deadline or were unconcerned about following the letter of the law when it came to prosecuting MOVE.) Normally this untimely request would have been promptly rejected as void under the law, but it was accepted by court clerks. Judge Edward Blake later granted the extension. (Blake became the Common Pleas Court President judge in 1991.)

To force MOVE members from the house, Rizzo got court approval to starve them out. On March 16, 1978 the police set up a blockade around the house and shut off water lines. Those inside included pregnant women, nursing babies, children and animals. Police arrested anyone who tried to break through the barricades, though some attempts to get food and water to MOVE were successful.

Because the blockade had disrupted fundraising activities, MOVE fell behind in mortgage payments on the Virginia farm. Some Philadelphia politicians and reporters went to Virginia and spread slanderous misinformation among people on adjoining properties by describing MOVE as a group of drug-taking cannibals who would slaughter everyone's cattle. This set off a rash of complaints to the realtor who demanded that MOVE pay off the entire mortgage at once. Unable to raise the full sum, MOVE lost their farm.

Philadelphia Daily News



The MOVE house on Osage Avenue

World Wide Photos



Ramona, Frank, Conrad and Teresa Africa

Osage Avenue

By 1983, government officials on all levels had proved ineffective and unwilling to take any action against the unjust imprisonment of innocent MOVE members. The media ignored the issue altogether. In Dec of 1983 MOVE by-passed the news blackout in a direct appeal to the public by using loudspeakers to inform people of the injustice and the City's conspiracy to eliminate them.

In 1984 Wilson Goode became mayor. While many Philadelphians were glowing with pride at the installment of the City's first black mayor, behind the scenes Goode reneged on his earlier promise and took no action as another confrontation with MOVE took shape. Anticipating how far the City would go to silence them, MOVE began fortifying their rowhouse at 6221 Osage Avenue in the Cobbs Creek section of West Philadelphia. At the same time, the police made preparations for a murderous assault by secretly obtaining from the FBI over 37 pounds of C-4, a powerful military explosive, although this violated police regulations, FBI policies and federal law regarding transfer of explosives.

News stories began covering MOVE once again but focused on the Osage Avenue neighbors' disagreements with MOVE rather than MOVE's long-standing legal dispute with the City. After MOVE held a meeting with neighborhood residents in May of 1984 to explain their position, police stepped up their campaign of intimidation and harassment. Between June and October Alfonso Africa was arrested and beaten bloody several times by police. On Aug 8, 1984 hundreds of police and firemen spent the day surrounding the Osage block in what came to be viewed as a dry run for the later disaster, but MOVE would not be provoked. Frustrated with City officials' inability to resolve the conflict, the Osage neighbors asked Governor Dick Thornburgh to take action, but he would not become involved.



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Frank Africa reads of Rizzo's starvation ultimatum



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The blockade goes up at 33rd and Powelton Avenue March 16, 1978

The Agreement

The blockade lasted almost two months, generating increased media attention. On April 16, 1978, thousands marched around City Hall protesting the City's action. As the situation became internationally known, Philadelphia's starvation blockade became an embarrassment to the human rights initiatives of President Carter and U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young.

While consistently demanding the release of their political prisoners, MOVE members were unwilling to make further court appearances and give judges the opportunity to issue more contempt citations.

The City tried to negotiate a settlement. MOVE knew officials could not be trusted but entered into an agreement to expose the City's deceit. Terms of the settlement were publicized May 3, 1978 before MOVE had given final approval. MOVE then told mediators why those in the house could not be legally arrested. When newly installed District Attorney Ed Rendell confirmed that the arrest warrants were indeed void as per Rule 1100, City Officials found themselves caught between federal pressure to end the stalemate, and the realization that political futures would be in jeopardy if the public found out the DA's office had blown the case. Terms were finalized after MOVE had a 90-day deadline for vacating the house deleted from the agreement. To obscure legal improprieties, a gag provision was included to prevent MOVE from talking to the media.

The City arranged for attorney Oscar Gaskins to handle legal proceedings and MOVE was not to appear in court. Police were allowed to arrest, arraign and release on bail pending appeal, each wanted member in the house. Police then searched the house for weapons and found only inoperative ones. In return, Jerry, Conrad, Robert and Sue Africa were released May 8 on their own recognizance pending appeal, and the City agreed to dispose of all other pending MOVE cases within 4-6 weeks.



Philadelphia Inquirer

Wilson Goode



Philadelphia Inquirer

Ed Rendell

Seeking Justice - Part I

After the Aug 8 confrontation both the police department's callous attitude and MOVE's determination and commitment only intensified. One officer was quoted as saying "They should have killed all of them." Bitter resentment and hostility endured beyond Rizzo's departure from office in Jan of 1980.

The primary activity of MOVE now became securing the release of innocent members facing not only 30-100 years in prison, but the wrath of a vindictive prison system and its abusive guards. Several members went on hunger strikes to obtain the basic rights other inmates received. MOVE's strategy was to file every grievance and exhaust every avenue of appeal before taking a confrontational stance.

In post trial motions, court-appointed lawyers neglected to raise the illegality of the arrest warrants. The appeal was denied by the State Supreme Court. When approached by MOVE, Common Pleas Court President Judge Edward Bradley admitted there were inconsistencies but declined to take any action. District Attorney Ed Rendell outright refused to meet with MOVE or lawyers willing to discuss MOVE cases, and Councilman Lucien Blackwell and City Council Chairman Joseph Coleman were non-committal.

Starting in 1982, MOVE was able to meet several times with City Managing Director Wilson Goode. After consulting a lawyer on MOVE's legal claims, Goode agreed that MOVE was innocent and promised to remedy the situation after he was elected mayor. During this time MOVE also took their case directly to the public by publishing a newspaper to correct widespread misconceptions.



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MOVE talks to negotiator Joel Todd



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Merle Africa is taken into custody as the agreement is implemented May 1978

Frame-Up

MOVE had been cited for housing code violations before the blockade and Judge G. Fred DiBona was ruling on these matters in civil court. Overstepping Judge William Mauritani's jurisdiction on the criminal warrants, DiBona issued directives regarding the criminal case that were not a part of the agreement. When Phil and Sue Africa went to question him about this on May 23, he cited Phil for contempt and revoked his bail. Knowing it was improper for a civil judge to change bail set in a criminal case, MOVE sensed a growing conspiracy.

On Aug 2, 1978, DiBona ruled that MOVE had violated the unagreed-to 90-day deadline and the DA's office then solicited MOVE arrest warrants for not vacating the house. The fact that Rendell's office could not legally practice law at a civil proceeding went unpublicized and the media was instrumental in perpetuating the myth that MOVE had agreed to a 90-day time limit. The City was so bent on framing and hunting down MOVE members that DiBona signed bench warrants authorizing police to bring before him practically every known MOVE adult, though over half of them were not in the house and couldn't possibly have violated an order to vacate it.

On Aug 5, Philadelphia authorities, in collaboration with Virginia police, staged a midnight raid on the Richmond home of two MOVE women and 14 children. Storming in at gunpoint, they arrested Gail and Rhonda Africa and took them back to Philadelphia. The legal justification for these arrests was Gail and Rhonda's alleged failure to leave a house they weren't within a hundred miles of.



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